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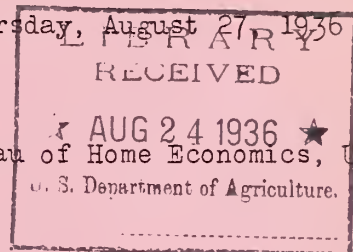
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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, August 27, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

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Subject: AMERICAN RICE." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.



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The August crop report of the United States Department of Agriculture states that rice is one crop giving promise of a normal harvest in this year of unfavorable weather.

Rice has for centuries been a cheap and widely available energy food, and almost every nation now has its own special way of cooking and serving it. If you should take a trip around the world and stop at a port in every land, you'd probably be able to eat a different rice dish at every stop.

Rice is an American food with a history. You may have heard that the American Indians were eating rice before the white man arrived. They did use a grain something like rice that they found growing in the swamps around the Great Lakes. This grain is not a true rice but the seed of a certain grass that grows wild in shallow lakes and marsh lands. We buy this Indian rice today generally under the name of "wild rice." But the supply of it is never large and it costs considerably more than true rice.

The history of rice in this country dates back to the early colonists in Virginia. They tried to grow rice from some Oriental seeds but failed. Late in the 17th century someone gave the governor of South Carolina some rough rice for seeds. Very soon the people of that and neighboring colonies were growing rice for their own use and for export to England. This industry prospered until the Civil War. But long before that rice culture had started on the lower Mississippi where conditions were particularly favorable for its growth. Rice is a water plant, you know -- that is, it needs to grow with its roots and half of its stem in water part of the time.

So today the States that produce American varieties of rice are Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and California where irrigation water is available and also the right kind of soil and weather. America now raises some of the finest varieties of rice in the world. And some good Americans of my acquaintance like rice so well that they would just as soon call this one of our national dishes.

Well, I like rice, too. But only when it's boiled so that each kernel is tender but whole, keeps its own distinct shape and has a white or creamy color. I like fluffy light rice. I can't say that I care for a heavy, sticky, darkish mass such as I've often seen. Rice is one of those foods that depend on cooking for its character. It can be delicious. But it also can be unattractive to look at and unappetizing to taste.

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That being the case, I think we citizens of the United States who like rice were in luck when the foods people at the Bureau of Home Economics started an investigation of the best ways of cooking American varieties of rice. As a result of their study, I can tell you some secrets about making the best of this good and inexpensive food.

Most rice dishes are based on boiled rice. So today I'd like to mention a few points about boiling rice properly. That's the cooking process that ruins many a good rice dish. Different varieties of rice take different lengths of time to boil tender. You may have to boil rice anywhere from 16 to 24 minutes to get it to just the proper tenderness -- done through and through but not cooked to death. The most common variety of rice -- the Blue Rose -- needs 22 minutes of boiling. The variety known as Rexoro requires only 16 minutes, is our "shortest cooker." The "longest cooker" is the Early Prolific requiring 24 minutes.

Of course, everyone who has cooked a dish of rice knows how it swells with boiling. For a family of five or six, allow about 1 cup of uncooked rice. That will be 3 and one-half cups of boiled rice.

Lightly salted gently boiling water is the medium for boiling rice. Use about 2 quarts of water and 2 teaspoons of salt for cooking 1 cup of rice. But before you put the rice in to boil, pick it over carefully and give it a bath in hot water. Washing it in hot water removes any soil and also that fine starch powder that may be on the outside of the grain and make it sticky.

Well, all this preparation done -- looking over, washing and draining -- you add the rice gradually to the rapidly boiling salted water. Then reduce the heat so the rice boils gently until every grain is tender. Avoid rapid boiling. It breaks up the kernels. And avoid cooking below the boiling point. It makes the kernels sticky.

Shall I tell you how to test rice to be sure it has cooked tender? Take out a little and press it between thumb and finger. If you don't feel any hard center, it's time to turn the rice into a sieve or colander and again pour hot water through it to remove loose starch and separate the grains. Last process: Cover the colander of rice with a clean towel and set it over hot water on the back of the stove, or place in a warm oven a short time. The kernels will continue to swell.

With this foundation of flaky boiled rice you can have all sorts of dishes -- American and foreign -- curries and gumbos and chop suey and creamed dishes of all sorts and -- but I'd better not start trying to list all the ways to use rice. It's a versatile food, fits in with almost anything anywhere in the meal. Once you know the secret of boiling it properly, you're off to a lot of good meals.

If you're interested in some of the best rice dishes, you are welcome to send for the new Department of Agriculture leaflet called "Cooking American Varieties of Rice." It is Leaflet No. 112. It will be sent without charge as long as the supply lasts. To request it, write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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